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21 Apr 86

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EXDIS/CONTRA, FOR EXDIS CONTRA DISTRIBUTION

FROM HABIB

E.O. 12356: DECL: OADR

TAGS: PREL, XK, HO

SUBJECT: HABIB'S VISIT: MEETING WITH PRESIDENT AZCONA

1. (SECRET-ENTIRE TEXT)

2. SUMMARY AND COMMENT: PRESIDENT AZCONA TOOK A STRONG AND REASSURING POSITION ON THE CONTADORA NEGOTIATIONS. HE REJECTED ANY INITIALLING OR SIGNING OF PARTIAL AGREEMENTS. HE WOULD INSIST THAT HONDURAS' PROPOSALS ON ARMS REDUCTION, MANEUVERS AND VERIFICATION WOULD HAVE TO BE ACCEPTED BEFORE THERE WAS ANY TREATY READY FOR SIGNATURE. AZCONA ALSO CLEARLY UNDERSTOOD THE NEED TO PUT INTO THE TREATY CONCRETE MEASURES FOR IMPLEMENTATION AND VERIFICATION OF POLITICAL COMMITMENTS. HE DREW MY ATTENTION TO A RECENT SPEECH IN WHICH HE MAINTAINED THAT NATIONAL RECONCILIATION IN NICARAGUA WAS INDISPENSABLE FOR REGIONAL PEACE. AZCONA HAS LITTLE INTEREST IN THE CENTRAL AMERICAN SUMMIT, WHICH HE EXPECTS WILL ISSUE AN EMPTY "LYRICAL" DECLARATION. WHILE THE COMMENTS OF AZCONA AND HIS FOREIGN MINISTRY ADVISERS INDICATED THEY ARE THINKING ALONG THE SAME LINES AS OURSELVES, REMARKS BY MILITARY COMMANDER REGALADO WERE NOT IN THE SAME SPIRIT. THE GENERAL APPARENTLY IS PIQUED BY A MISUNDERSTANDING OVER THE AMOUNT OF EMERGENCY ASSISTANCE WE AGREED TO PROVIDE. END SUMMARY AND COMMENT.

3. AMBASSADOR FERCH AND I MET ON APRIL 19 WITH PRESIDENT AZCONA, WHO WAS ACCOMPANIED BY GENERAL REGALADO AND SEVERAL FOREIGN MINISTRY ADVISORS. NSC STAFF MEMBER BURGHARDT AND POLCOUNSELOR WILKINSON ALSO PARTICIPATED. I BEGAN BY BRIEFLY DESCRIBING OUR CONGRESSIONAL SITUATION ON CONTRA AID. I TOLD AZCONA THAT THE ISSUE WOULD NOT COME UP FOR A VOTE BEFORE MAY 12 AND THAT WE BELIEVED WE HAD THE VOTES TO PASS THE PRESIDENT'S PROPOSAL WHEN WE CAN GET A STRAIGHT UP-AND-DOWN VOTE. AZCONA MADE NO COMMENT. I EXPLAINED THAT THE PURPOSE OF MY TRIP WAS TO REVIEW THE DIPLOMATIC SITUATION, ESPECIALLY WITH THE CENTRAL AMERICAN DEMOCRACIES.

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4. AZCONA SAID THE PANAMA MEETING HAD BEEN A POSITIVE DEVELOPMENT FOR HONDURAS. BECAUSE OF THE POSITIONS HONDURAS HAD TAKEN CONCERNING THE NICARAGUAN INCURSION AND THE CONTRA AID VOTE, OTHER COUNTRIES HAD PORTRAYED HONDURAS AS THE "GREAT AGGRESSOR." BUT NOW NICARAGUA WAS ON THE DEFENSIVE AFTER DEMONSTRATING THAT IT DOES NOT WANT A POLITICAL SOLUTION. AZCONA SAID HE HAD NOT SHARED U.S. FEARS THAT THE PANAMA MEETING WOULD BE DOMINATED BY CONTADORA PRESSURE FOR BILATERAL NEGOTIATIONS. THE GOH HAD NOTICED A DISTINCT HARDENING OF COSTA RICA'S POSITION TOWARD NICARAGUA, NOW FURTHER INTENSIFIED BY THE RECENT NICARAGUAN INCURSION AND SUSPICION THAT THE SANDINISTAS MIGHT BE INVOLVED IN THE GRENADE INCIDENT NEAR THE U.S. EMBASSY.

5. AZCONA SAID THE CONTADORA PROCESS SHOULD NOT BE ALLOWED TO DISAPPEAR, EVEN IF NO AGREEMENT IS ACHIEVED. THE PROCESS ALLOWS HONDURAS TO SHOW THAT IT IS IN FAVOR OF A PEACUYUF C L! ION. AZC
ID MY LETTER TO
CONGRESSMAN SLATTEREY WAS USEFUL IN SHOWING A POSITIVE U.S. VIEW TOWARD CONTADORA. I AGREED WITH AZCONA THAT WE MUST NOT APPEAR TO TORPEDO CONTADORA, BUT I CAUTIONED THAT WE MUST NOT BE DECEIVED BY A POSSIBLE SANDINISTA PLOY, IN WHICH THEY WOULD USE THEIR TOUGH POSITION IN PANAMA TO WRING CONCESSIONS OUT OF THE OTHER COUNTRIES. WE WERE CONCERNED THAT THE CONTADORA AND SUPPORT GROUPS WERE SO ANXIOUS TO COMPLETE THE PROCESS THAT THEY WOULD GIVE NICARAGUA WHAT IT WANTS TO GET ITS SIGNATURE. BURGHARDT AND I OUTLINED OUR SPECIFIC AREAS OF CONCERN, ALONG THE SAME LINES AS AT PREVIOUS STOPS, STRESSING THE NECESSITY OF A COMPREHENSIVE AGREEMENT, SIMULTANEOUS IMPLEMENTATION, WITH FULL VERIFICATION.

6. THE HONDURANS WERE VERY REASSURING. AZCONA SAID HE WOULD NOT APPROVE ANY CONCESSIONS. IF THE SANDINISTAS ACCEPTED HONDURAS' PROPOSALS ON ARMS REDUCTION, MANEUVERS AND VERIFICATION, THEN THERE WOULD BE AN AGREEMENT; OTHERWISE, THERE WOULD NOT BE. AZCONA REJECTED ANY INITIALLING OR SIGNATURE OF PARTIAL ACCORDS. FOREIGN MINISTRY ADVISER CALLEJAS ADDED THAT HONDURAS WOULD INSIST THAT PRIOR TO SIGNATURE, AGREEMENT MUST BE REACHED ON THE VERIFICATION ANNEX WHICH THE CORE THREE TABLED LAST YEAR. CALLEJAS NOTED THAT THROUGHOUT THE CONTADORA PROCESS MANAGUA'S STANDARD TACTIC HAS BEEN TO CREATE AN IMPASSE AND THEN EXPECT CONCESSIONS TO RESUME NEGOTIATIONS.

7. WE NOTED THAT ONE WEAKNESS OF THE DRAFT ACTA WAS
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THAT IT HAD NO SERIOUS PROVISIONS FOR IMPLEMENTATION AND VERIFICATION OF POLITICAL COMMITMENTS. AZCONA AGREED THAT THIS MUST BE CORRECTED. HE NOTED THAT IN HIS TELEVISION ADDRESS ON APRIL 4 HE STATED THAT RESOLUTION OF THE INTERNAL POLITICAL PROBLEMS IN NICARAGUA IS INDISPENSABLE FOR PEACE IN CENTRAL AMERICA. IN THE SAME SPEECH, AZCONA STRONGLY ENDORSED THE SIX-PARTY

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DECLARATION.

8. I SAID WE UNDERSTAND THE CORE THREE HAS DEVELOPED PROPOSALS ON THE SECURITY ISSUES WHICH REPRESENT IMPROVEMENTS OVER SOME TREATY REVISIONS PROPOSED BY CONTADORA. I SUGGESTED THAT DURING THE FIRST WEEK IN MAY, OUR SPECIALISTS COULD MEET WITH THE HONDURANS TECHNICIANS TO EXCHANGE VIEWS IN DETAIL ON THE ENTIRE DRAFT TEXT. AZCONA AGREED.
CENTRAL AMERICAN SUMMIT

9. AZCONA TOOK A VERY DIM VIEW OF THE ESQUIPULAS SUMMIT, WHICH HE EXPECTED WOULD PRODUCE NOTHING MORE THAN "LYRICAL" DECLARATIONS. HE THOUGHT THE CENTRAL AMERICAN PARLIAMENT WOULD BE OF NO VALUE AND STILL WAS UNDER THE IMPRESSION THAT CEREZO WAS INSISTING ON DEFERRING DIRECT ELECTIONS. I SUGGESTED THAT THE SUMMIT COULD BE USEFUL IF THE FOUR DEMOCRACIES COULD FOCUS POLITICAL PRESSURE ON NICARAGUA. AZCONA MADE SOME COMMENTS ON HIS COLLEAGUES: HE VIEWED CEREZO AS "IDEALISTIC", WAS CONCERNED ABOUT THE TONE OF A LETTER HE HAD RECEIVED THAT DAY FROM DUARTE, AND THOUGHT ARIAS -- ALTHOUGH POLITICALLY "MODEST AND TIMID" -- HAD BEGUN TO CHANGE HIS EXCESSIVELY PESSIMISTIC VIEW ABOUT THE VALUE OF APPLYING PRESSURE ON THE SANDINISTAS.
DISINFORMATION

10. AZCONA EXPRESSED DISMAY AT THE AMOUNT OF DISINFORMATION ABOUT HONDURAS WHICH CIRCULATED IN THE U.S. HE CITED THE EXAMPLE OF AN INTERVIEW ABOUT TEN DAYS EARLIER WITH CONGRESSMAN HENRY GONZALEZ, CONDUCTED BY A REPORTER NAMED D'ESCALANTI. GONZALEZ APPARENTLY MADE SOME COMMENTS ABOUT THE ACTIVITIES IN HONDURAS OF CUBAN EXILES. I PROMISED TO TRY TO TALK WITH GONZALEZ. BUT I ALSO OBSERVED THAT IT WOULD HELP IF THE CENTRAL AMERICAN EMBASSIES AND OTHER OFFICIALS WERE MORE ACTIVE IN SPEAKING WITH OUR CONGRESS AND PUBLIC.
MILITARY ISSUES

11. IN AN EFFORT TO DRAW REGALADO INTO THE DISCUSSION, I ASKED IF HE FELT HE COULD COUNT ON GREATER CONSTANCY IN OUR MILITARY SUPPORT EFFORTS. HE REPLIED THAT HE COULD NOT, INSISTING THAT WE WERE LOSING CREDIBILITY BECAUSE WE HAD MADE PROMISES WHICH WE DID NOT KEEP. AMBASSADOR FERCH EXPLAINED THAT THIS REFERRED TO A MISUNDERSTANDING BECAUSE OF THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THE CONTINGENCY NEEDS LIST DRAWN UP BY THE DLA REPRESENTATIVE AND THE U.S. DOLS 20 MILLION PROVIDED IN 506 FUNDS. BURGHARDT STRESSED THAT PROVISION OF THE US DOLS 20 MILLION WAS AN EXTRAORDINARY ACTION, TAKEN BY THE PRESIDENT, WHICH DEMONSTRATED OUR SPECIAL COMMITMENT TO HONDURAS; THAT FACT SHOULD NOT BE LOST SIGHT OF BECAUSE OF THE MISUNDERSTANDING TO WHICH REGALADO HAD REFERRED.

12. I ALSO ASKED REGALADO IF HE HAD BEEN DEVELOPING CONTACTS WITH THE OTHER CENTRAL AMERICAN MILITARY COMMANDERS WHICH PARALLELED THE EFFORTS TO DEVELOP COOPERATIVE DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS. REGALADO RESPONDED THAT IT WAS NECESSARY TO MAKE CONTACTS WITH THE OTHER CENTRAL AMERICAN DEFENSE MINISTERS, INCLUDING THE NICARAGUAN, BECAUSE IF THE U.S. WOULD NOT PROVIDE HONDURAS' MINIMUM DEFENSE NEEDS, IT HAD TO DEVELOP ALLIANCES TO DEFEND ITSELF. (COMMENT: THIS RESPONSE OBVIOUSLY RAISED MORE QUESTIONS THAN IT ANSWERED, BUT I CHOSE TO ALLOW THE EMBASSY TO CLARIFY THE MATTER.

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END COMMENT).
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END OF MESSAGE

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